

Message from the President

All Eyes East

As Donald Trump assumes the Presidency of the United States, there is but a single certainty: change is imminent. The nature and degree of change stretch out in front of us as a vast, open plain devoid of any features until we are upon it. We can guess at how the landscape might lie, the time horizons ahead of us, and how rough or smooth the trail will be, but we will not know for certain what the journey holds in store until we are underway. And so it is that we turn our eyes east, and we watch and wait.

Leading up to the election, there was ample rhetoric — from all parties — on topics of acute interest to avocado growers. Sentiments on trade and immigration policy differed widely between candidates, as did stated views on environmental issues and infrastructure investment — all of importance to California agriculture. Rhetoric is not action, however. Rather, it is directional, and despite the alignment which now exists between the Legislative and Executive branches of government, action still takes the collective will of the majority. As the yokes are placed on the oxen, we will see which have the determination to pull.

Like millions of Americans before us, we hold an idealized vision of what we would like our future to be. Many California avocado growers picture a world where competition, at least in part, is held in check. Others see government intervention in the drought in the West, through infrastructure improvement and relief from high-priced water. Some picture a guest worker program that provides cheap labor when it is need-

ed without ties to permanent residency. This is America, after all, and anything is possible.

Then there is the stark reality that nothing is ever easy or as simple as it should be. Sure, with the stroke of a pen (or rather, the withholding of a signature) President Trump could single-handedly cause the Trans-Pacific Partnership to fail. But that is less likely to be the case with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has been in place since 1994. Mexico's early willingness to renegotiate the agreement and Mr. Trump's unhappiness with NAFTA's performance certainly suggest that change is likely, but the breadth of the current agreement makes it all but impossible to predict the specifics of such change. Although rolling back certain provisions of NAFTA could lead to the reinstatement of tariffs, the imposition of other protective measures, such as seasonal import quotas, would be frowned upon by the World Trade Organization, to which the United States remains a party.

It is worth noting, too, that as you scroll through the 600 plus pages of legal text that constitute NAFTA, the word "avocado" is all but absent. NAFTA, contrary to common belief, had no direct effect on Mexico's ability to ship avocados to the United States. The decision, before and after NAFTA, rested in the hands of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) because the prohibition on entry was entirely based on legitimate phytosanitary concerns. Of course, the spirit of NAFTA created a tidal wave of change that quickly overtook USDA, forcing the agency



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to identify a solution that would satisfy both governments. Even then, complete access for Mexico was 23 more years in the making. The dismantling of NAFTA, therefore, by itself, does not guarantee a cessation of imports from Mexico.

Undoubtedly, the same holds true for immigration reform — it is not apt to be swift nor easy. Mr. Trump has clearly articulated many of his priorities but a specific plan for agricultural guest workers remains forthcoming. The President's disdain for regulation provides hope that, at a minimum, a streamlined guest worker program can be put in place, and many in agriculture will be working with the new administration to see this accomplished. On this issue, our new President must collaborate with Congress, and though all of one party, individual Congressional members may not necessarily be all of one mind.

Infrastructure investment and environmental policy changes may be closer at hand. The former is mostly a matter of appropriation and the latter a function of regulatory change, which is largely deemed the exclusive realm of the Executive Branch. Most observers expect the promulgation of new regulations to grind to a near halt, as the President scrutinizes what is working and what isn't. And, as we all know, there are plenty



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To contact a CAC representative, please visit:
CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives

of federal regulations that pertain to agriculture in California.

As the new administration gains momentum, the Commission will be paying close attention, looking for opportunities to further the interests of California avocado growers. To be fair to all, take heart in the fact that we would be doing the same even if Secretary Clinton had been successful in

her bid for the Presidency. The difference is, I suppose, that the mandate for change is palpable and expectations are running high. Nonetheless, in the early days of what promises to be a very different approach to government, we must wait and let the details of the new landscape come into focus. 🥑

At Long Last, the Avocado Emoji is Here!

Emojis – those icons on your phone like the smiley face – are used to express emotion, to convey the things words cannot or communicate them in less space, to express our feelings and even let friends know what we're having for lunch. But ever since emojis have been around a very important one had been missing: the avocado. Until now!

Earlier this year, the California Avocado Commission (CAC) developed a social media campaign encouraging fans to push The Unicode Consortium (the non-profit corporation that governs the issuance of new emojis) for an avocado emoji. CAC started a campaign on iPetition and by the end of May achieved the goal of 1,000+ signatures by avocado fans asking for an avocado emoji. More than a third left encouraging comments, and beyond the petition itself the campaign was noted on social media and by traditional media such as Newsweek.

In June, CAC celebrated with fans on social media after The Unicode Consortium announced that an avocado emoji would be coming out soon. At last, in December the long-awaited avocado emoji became available on iPhones with iOS 10.2.

CAC prepared communication in anticipation of the announcement and immediately launched an online conversation celebrating the release. A dedicated email to CAC's nearly 250,000 subscribers was sent out, which included a "Click-to-Tweet" link that recipients could click to share the news. More than 70 people shared the tweet that showed the emoji and included CAC's Twitter handle @CA_Avocados.

Additionally, California-branded social media posts were developed that encouraged fans to share the news and engage with the avocado emoji with their friends, reaching more than 600,000 people in 48 hours.

And share they did...more than 400 times across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Even the popular culinary magazine *Bon Appetit* posted an article saying, "Don't panic, the avocado emoji is finally here!"

CAC expects excitement to continue as avocado lovers around the world realize that all of their emoji dreams are now a reality. Avocados have always been in our hearts, and now they're in our phones. 🥑

